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Deputy Director (Intelligence)

20 February 1964

Assistant Director, Research and Reports

Transmittal of Reports on 1964 Prospects for Agriculture  
in Communist Countries.

The attached papers on the current 1964 outlook for agriculture  
in Communist countries are in response to a request from the DCI  
18 February.

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Enclosures: (3)

1.

2.

3. Prospects for Agriculture in the USSR in 1964

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Prospects for Agriculture in the USSR in 1964

1. As of mid-February, crop prospects in the USSR appear to be somewhat better than at the same time a year ago primarily because of a record area of fall-sown grain and favorable moisture conditions in the New Lands' area. Weather during the growing season will be of paramount importance in determining the size of the harvest of both fall-sown and spring-sown crops.
2. A record area of about 45 million hectares, or 111 million acres, of which about half is winter wheat was seeded to winter grains in the fall of 1963 for harvest in 1964. Extremely dry conditions in the fall in some areas, especially in the Southern Ukraine and Moldavia, affected seed germination and retarded plant development. The Soviets have already indicated that the dry conditions in the fall of 1963 will necessitate some reseedling in the spring of 1964.
3. Following an abnormally warm fall in the winter grain areas, the winter of 1963/64 has been marked by a series of warm and cold spells which has resulted in alternate thawing and freezing. In some areas, inadequate snow cover has left the grain fields exposed during some of the cold weather, and some ice crusting has been noted. Thus, fall-sown grains in some areas have been subjected to weather conditions similar to those which adversely affected the winter grain crop of 1963. Although a Tass report in late January indicated that the unusual winter, "has on the whole not caused substantial damage to the crops," there is little doubt that some winterkill has occurred.
4. In the New Lands' area, the possibility that a relatively good grain crop will be harvested in 1964 is increasing. Above normal precipitation has occurred during the fall and winter months, and indications are that moisture reserves at the beginning of the 1964 crop season in the New Lands' area will be good. With good moisture conditions at sowing time in April-May, the Soviets may, in an attempt to recover from the disastrous wheat crop in 1963, not increase the area left in clean fallow to 20 percent as they have previously indicated. Should they follow through on their announced plan to increase the area in clean fallow the sown area will be reduced accordingly.
5. Although weather during the winter gives some indication of the forthcoming harvest, during the growing and harvesting season it is of paramount importance in determining the level of crop production. Weather during the period May-August is most crucial to crop development.

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and crop conditions and prospects during this period can change rapidly. Although some results can be expected from increased use of fertilizers on grain, the program to raise yields will not have a major effect in 1964.

6. Current prospects for the production of livestock products in 1964 are not favorable. A shortage of feed, which will continue through the first part of 1964, has resulted in reduced herds. The number of swine is about 42 percent less than a year ago. Although feed efficiency may improve slightly because of the better ratio of animals to feed supply, some herd rebuilding will have to be done at the expense of meat production.